GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
TOURISM AND CULTURE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:906
ANSWERED ON:23.11.2000
SMUGGLING OF INDIAN CULTURAL EQUIPMENTS
P.D. ELANGOVAN

Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have the complete record on the details of the Indian Cultural equipments, artifacts and treasure troves smuggled and found in the various Museums all over the world;

(b) if so, the details thereof, about the mode of disposal of the treasure finds which include ornaments, coins, icons, and other antiquities of Metal (Gold, Silver, Copper, Bronze, Brass, Iron), Stone, Terracotta, Ivory, Horn, Sandal and other wood, etc. in the various Museums all over the world;

(c) whether the Government have asked these Museum Directors and curators to furnish the details of the Indian antiques deposited or found in the respective Museums;

(d) if so, the details thereof, country-wise;

(e) if not, whether the Government propose to send a archaeologists and antique experts from India to the various Museums all over the world to collect data on the Indian antiquities and art objects found in these Museums; and

(f) if so, the details thereof ?

Answer

MINISTER OF TOURISM & CULTURE (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR)

(a) to (f) : Prior to Independence, a large number of cultural objects had moved from the Indian Subcontinent to different parts of the world. These objects are scattered among innumerable museums and private collections. There is no international covenant for the restitution of such objects. Further, because of partition of the Indian Subcontinent, there would be competing claims about the country of origin of these objects. In view of this, building a complete record of such objects is not only time consuming and problematic but also unlikely to yield practical results so far as restitution is concerned. According to the information available, no country has prepared such a record.
After Independence, the Antiquities (Export Control) Act, 1947 was promulgated in 1947, which was succeeded by the enactment of the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972. Under this Act, illegal export is a crime for which the assistance of Interpol can be availed. Further, in respect of the countries, which are signatories to the UNESCO Convention on `Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Imports, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property` action can be initiated as per the provisions of the Convention. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has been taking action wherever the instances of objects being taken illegally out of the country have come to its notice. During the last fifteen years, ASI has recovered the following art objects :

1. Stucco Heads, Nalanda (Bihar)
2. Two Sunga Pillars of 2nd Century B.C., Surajkund, Amin (Haryana)
3. Terracotta Yakshi, Tamluk, Midnapur District (West Bengal).
4. Nataraja, Tiruvilakkudi, Tanjore District (Tamil Nadu)
5. Nataraja, Sivapuram, Tanjore District (Tamil Nadu)
6. Nataraja, Pathur, Tanjore District (Tamil Nadu)
7. Image of Buddha, Bodh Gaya (Bihar)
8. Image of Krishnajanma, Dhubela, Chhatrapur District (Madhya Pradesh).
9. Paintings, Chandigarh Museum (Chandigarh)
10. Terracotta figure, Bhitargoan (Uttar Pradesh).
11. Image of Lakulisa, Jageswar, Almora District (Uttar Pradesh).